SECRET (Security Classification)

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM: AmConsGen Istanbul

TO: THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

DATE: January 4, 1954

REF: Department's CA-2424, November 12, 1953

ACTION: EUR

INFO: OCB-1 L-2 NEA-4 EUR/X-1 Rep-4 OIR-2 OSI-1 Army-3 Navy-2 Air-2 OCB-1 USIA-10

SUBJECT: PERIPHERAL: Information on Albania

In compliance with Department's instruction under reference, in connection with the preparation of the Periodic Reporting Guide on Albania, transmitted herein is information collected from Albanian refugees in Istanbul. The main source of the information is

B-1

1. Party

A. There is no doubt that the three most important leaders of the Albanian Communist Party were Enver HOXHA, Mehmed SHEHU and Kocho XAXA. With the liquidating of Xaxa in 1948 only Enver and Shehu Mehmed remained; all the rest are of secondary importance. Mehmed Shehu has always considered himself stronger than Enver. As a matter of fact, Enver has always treated Shehu as a strong opponent rather than as an underling. In reality the roles played by Mehmed Shehu and Kocho Xaxa in the founding of the Albanian Communist Party were of much greater importance than the role of Enver Hoxha. Mehmed Shehu was the commander of the 1st Communist Brigade from 1941 until 1944 and he fought on all fronts while Enver was doing much less dangerous work as secretary general. Enver was brought to the head of the temporary government founded at the meeting of PERNETI on the insistance of the representatives of the Yugoslav Communist Party, Dushan MOGUSHA and Miladin PETROVITCH. In later years, Enver's willingness to follow blindly all orders coming from Moscow pleased Stalin and it was found advisable to leave the more independent, braver Shehu in the background. There is no doubt that at a given moment these two ambitious and unscrupulous men will fall upon each other because there exists no friendship between them. Until now Moscow has been successful in preventing such an incident. If, however, such an open conflict is to take place in the future, it is to be expected that Mehmed Shehu will emerge as the victor. The reason for this is that many army commanders are followers of Shehu and that no other Politburo member can muster enough support to play an important role in governmental or party politics. Let us analyze them in turn:

ABorissevitch/vb
REPORTER

SECRET

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

861017

DEPARTMENT OF STATE/EA/CDC/MR
( ) RELEASE ( ) DECLASSIFY
(X) EXCISE (X) DECLASSIFY in PART
( ) DENY ( ) DELETE

REVIEWED by ... Date ...
FOI, EO or PA exemptions ...
( ) CLASSIFY as ...
( ) DOWNGRADE to ...
( ) CADR

Return to Retained RM

767.00/1-454

SECRET FILE

JAN 22 1954

Hysnu KAPO, a nurse at Avlona who rose to political importance during the years of guerrilla warfare. He would lose all his importance the moment Enver would stop protecting him. Mehmed Shehu is opposed to Kapo, who openly supports Enver. In the new Albanian government formed on June 24, 1953, Hysnu Kapo was given the portfolio of Minister of Agriculture and second assistant premier.

Gogo NUSHI rose to fame during the years of guerrilla warfare at which time he was promoted to the rank of officer due to his hard and brave fighting. After the formation of the first government, he held various administrative posts, such as police superintendent, and during his tenure of office he proved to be a faithful executor of all orders coming from his superiors. He rose in the ranks of the Party due to his mercilessness and loyalty to his superiors. He was rewarded for his activities by being given the post of Minister of Trade and Communications in the latest Albanian government. Gogo Nushi is also known to have close ties with Enver Hoxha.

General Beqir BALLUKU, a tailor's apprentice, native of Tirana; this man who has had absolutely no military education also rose to an important post with the aid of Enver's backing. In 1950, while Chief of Staff of the Albanian armed forces, he retired on the insistence of Mehmed Shehu and remained in the background for almost two years. In June 1953, he was brought to the post of Minister of Defense on Enver's suggestion. Politically an unimportant person, Balluku is not even popular among communists of his native Tirana. His star depends entirely on Enver's influence.

M-me Liri BELISHOVA, the first female guerrilla, rose to importance immediately after 1944 when she was appointed Minister of Eduoation and given highest Party honors. Of late it is said that her relationship with Enver Hoxha is somewhat strained. It has been rumored that she is often included on the list of delegates to foreign countries, with the aim of keeping her away from Tirana. It has also been rumored that her liquidation was discussed but has been postponed because Moscow has not approved of such a plan. For this reason her liquidation has been put off for the present. The main reasons for her falling into disfavor were caused by the jealousy existing between her and Lire GEGA and M-me CUGLINI (M-me Enver Hoxha) as well as her strong criticism of the government in 1951. For these reasons she has lost in political importance and was removed from the leadership of the feminine branch of the Party.

Spiro KOLEKA, an engineer and a staunch communist, is one of the most important members of the Albanian Politburo. Since 1944 he has always figured on the list of government, Party and Politburo administrators; a member of the Central Committee of the

Communist Party since 1944, he went on more than one official visit to Moscow, and, according to the source, is one of the Albanian Communists enjoying full confidence of Moscow. In source's opinion, Spiro Koleka ranks third in importance after Enver and Shehu.

Aside from the seven important Communist Albanian leaders listed above, the source considers the following at least as dangerous as Beqir Balluku and Hysnu Kapo, if not more important and more dangerous.

General Bedri SPAHI, first volunteer of the communist cause in Albania and a man who has been of greater service to that cause than Enver. A man with many followers within the Communist Party, he was given the post of Minister of Education and Culture within the new government.

General Tuk YAKOVA, a friend of Hysnu Kapo but a follower of Shehu Mehmed, is one of the oldest Communists. It is said that Shehu places great faith in Yakova. He was included in the new government on the insistence of Shehu. Aside from these, the other most important Party members, according to source are also the following: General Shefqet KELLEZI; Fadil KELLEZI; Mihal PRIFTI, presently Ambassador to Moscow; Kadri HASLIYA; Kicho NGJELA; Kazim KONDI; Bilbil KLOSI; Gogo NUSHI; Kahriman JLLI; Medar and Bahar SHTYLA.

The rest are persons of secondary importance and have no influence on the politics of the country nor do they command the respect of any great number of followers and thus cannot be considered as playing an important role in politics or influencing other political leaders.

B. Taking into consideration the posts occupied by Enver and Shehu, considered to be equally strong, the fact that Shehu occupies only the post of Minister of Interior and is a member of the Politburo and that he has been removed from the Secretariat General of the Party does not indicate that Enver has won a victory. Ever since 1952 there were rumors that Enver has fallen into disgrace and even disappeared and that he would be replaced by Mehmet Shehu. Moscow, which did not approve of the internal strife between the two Albanian leaders, gave orders to its Ambassador, Clement Danilovitch LEVISHKIN, to punish both Communist leaders, as well as to pacify them. It was for this reason that Enver retained a majority in the government and that the rebellious Shehu lost his Party secretariat. On the other hand, Enver was deprived of two ministries which he held ever since 1944. He kept the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as that of Minister of Defense. Separate ministers were brought to fill the two cabinet posts vacated by

SECRET
(Classification)

Enver, who retained only the post of Premier. Radio Tirana announced on June 24, 1953 that Enver was brought to the presidency of the Council of Ministers while Mehmet Shehu was appointed the Council's vice president. It will be seen that thus Moscow has reprimanded both leaders and has seemingly restored Enver's supremacy over Shehu, although the old feud between the two will surely continue mainly because it is to the disadvantage of Moscow to have either Enver or Shehu without a rival. Ambassador Levishkin, who apparently has wide diplomatic practice was found to be a competent man in handling the Albanian affairs.

C. The fact that some members of the Central Committee are in contact with the Yugoslav Communist Party is known to the sources. They (sources) believe that those who favor an alliance with Yugoslavia must figure among the ten persons listed below. They stress, however, that they cannot state anything definite. It is known that had Enver and Shehu not liquidated Xaxa in 1948 as they did, then Xaxa would have severed relations with Moscow and would have formed an alliance with Tito. He disclosed his plans too early and reaped the consequences -- he was killed. However, it is certain that Xaxa was not alone at that time and that he had many accomplices within the Party, people who even today are active in Albanian politics. Aside from those executed together with Xaxa, a number of high Party officials, who had supported Xaxa, were spared but lost their high positions.

1. Pandi KRISTO, in 1948 chairman of the State Control Commission
2. Vasko KOLEDJI, assistant chief of the Sigurimi
3. Nesti KERENXHI, chief of the State Planning Commission
4. Zihni MUCHO, secretary general of the Prime Minister's office
5. Nako Mitro YORGI, one of the department chiefs of the Ministry of Interior
6. Kristo THEMELKO, assistant Minister for Defense
7. Ramadan CHITAKU, Minister of Finance
8. Pllumb DISHNICA, political officer attached to the Ministry of Defense
9. Gjel ARGIRI, department chief of the Ministry of Defense
10. Ilyas ARGIRI, assistant Minister of Finance

86 101

The above listed persons were all close friends and colleagues of Xaxa Koonо and even today hold posts in the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party.

D. There are only a very limited number of people within the ranks of the Albanian Communist Party who have the qualifications of a leader. Many others have important titles and ranks but they constitute only the retinue of the born leaders and do not have any influence over the population. The only reason they are feared and respected is that they are cruel. The true Communist leaders are the following:

1. Dr. Omer NISHANI, a graduate of Istanbul's Faculty of Medicine and a member of the Albanian Communist Party since 1924. He visited the Soviet Union and Moscow on many occasions and returned to Albania in 1940 during the first year of Italian occupation. He has served as President of the Presidium (President of the country) since 1944 and was relieved of his functions on August 1, 1953 because of his advanced age. A native of Gynokastro, he is married to a Jewess.

2. General Hadji LLESHI, elected President of the Presidium on August 1, 1953 to succeed Dr. Nishani, is the son of Halid LLESHI of Debre. A man with secondary school education only, he worked with the Yugoslav Communist Party from 1944 to 1948 and returned to Albania after the quarrel between Tito and Enver Hoxha. Having a wide following among the inhabitants of the Debre region, he was elected to the highest symbolic post in the country.

3. General Muslim PEZA is an uneducated man from a village of the Tirana region. He joined the communist underground movement in 1941 and the guerrilla formations under his command formed the first units of the Albanian Communist army. He defended the Communist guerrillas from other nationalist patriotic underground forces and earned the title of "Father of the Communists". He holds the post of President of the National Assembly since 1944 but does not exercise any political influence at all. It was reported, of late, that he has turned into a chronic alcoholic. Despite the fact that he is almost illiterate, he has many followers around Tirana and can muster 500-600 armed followers at any moment. More than being a Communist, Peza is an opportunist.

4. General Dali NDREN was born in Debre and is a graduate of the Tirana reserve officers' academy, year 1937. He joined the Communist Party in 1941, and despite the fact that the Reds killed his brothers and many members of his family, he remained loyal to the Party. Since 1945 he is in command of Albania's reserve forces. He belongs to one of the most prominent families of Debre. His uncle, Djon FLEZI, escaped to Yugoslavia in 1949

but was there arrested and imprisoned in the prison of Sremska Mitrovica where he dies in 1952.

5. General Enver Hoxha was born in Gjinokastro and graduated from the Korcha high school. Later he attended the Faculty of Law at the Sorbonne in Paris but failed to pass his final exams. He served as a secretary at the royal Albanian Legation at Brussels until 1937, then returned to Albania and took a job as a teacher at his former high school. He began cooperatin with the Yugoslav and Russian Communist Parties in 1940, and at the Congress of Permet was appointed the Albanian Communist Party's Secretary General and head of the provisional government. Since 1944 he is the recognized head of the Albanian Government and its Communist Party, and holds the rank of General of the army. He belongs to one of the first families and is the son of a 'hodja'. He is an ardent egotist and a very proud man.

6. General Mehmed Shehu, a native of Gjinokastro, is the son of a fanatic Moslem sheik. A graduate of a secondary school and the Tirana reserve officers' academy, Shehu fled Albania in order to take part in the Spanish Civil War. He was pardoned by the Albanian Government and allowed to return after the Spanish war was over. In 1941 he went underground with Enver Hoxha and became the commander of the 1st Communist brigade in 1942. In this capacity he commanded the campaigns in southern and northern Albania. He was promoted to the rank of General for his bravery shown during the liberation of Tirana from the Germans. A bloodthirsty terrorist, he takes great pleasure in killing and is proud of having executed many hundreds of nationalists personally.

7. General Bedri SPAHI, also a native of Gjinokastro, belongs to one of the most prominent families of that city. Having finished his high school studies, he graduated from the Tirana reserve officers' academy and in 1937 was arrested, together with fourteen colleagues, for spreading communist propaganda and trying to form a communist organization in the army. After some time, he was released as the result of a royal amnesty, but was expelled from the army. In 1941 he formed the Communist Party cell at Gjinokastro and with his own band of guerrillas went underground. In 1944, as prosecutor of the country's highest military court, he had three hundred prominent Albanian patriots brought to trial and succeeded in having most of them executed. On August 1, 1953, he was appointed Minister of Education and Culture of the new Albanian Government.

8. General Shevket PEGI belongs to a middle-class family from Gjinokastro. He was serving in the army as an artillery master sergeant in 1939. He joined Mehmet Shehu's guerrilla forces in 1941 and fought until 1944, commanding various guerrilla units and brigades. After 1944 he remained with the army and, at

86 1017

present, is in command of the 1st Infantry Division stationed at Tirana. Like Shehu and Spahi, he belongs to the group of old communists.

E. In conclusion it must be said that the government officials, Party leaders and dignitaries, as well as Central Committee members, are all closely bound to the Communist Party. This they have proved by committing innumerable crimes in favor of their Party, crimes which will not be forgiven by any future Albanian regime and which have only served their own interests. These people know that their crimes will never be forgiven them and it is for this reason that they support their Party with all their might, knowing that the Communist government ensures their self-preservation. Today the bulk of the Communist Party's strength lies in the ranks of the "Sigurimi" (security) troops. Among smaller government employees and the army, only 10 percent are loyal to the Party. According to the sources, last year, a battalion commander, stationed along the Greek-Albanian border, sent the Albanians in exile a message in which he stated that in case he could trust the friendship of the Greeks, he would desert with his entire battalion and equipment and join the fight for Albanian independence. Many other armed forces personnel have expressed similar desire in their messages. It is the sources' opinion that the forces willing to fight the Communists could reach ten to twelve thousand men.

F. Sources have no information concerning Theodor HEBA and Spiro PANO.

II. The Government

A. At a joint meeting of the Central Committee of the Albanian Workers (Communist) Party, of the Council of Ministers, of the Presidium and the diplomatic and military representatives of the Soviet Union, Ambassador Clement D. LEVISHKIN and General Joachim SOKOLOFF respectively, held on July 23, 1953, it was decided that the Albanian Government should be remodelled. Certain changes were found necessary in the government, such as abolishing or incorporating separate departments. The security of the country had to be placed into more reliable hands, mainly because of the increased anti-Albanian preparations in Yugoslavia. The newly constituted government took over the reigns of the country on August 1, 1953. Another reason for the reshuffling of the Albanian Government is explained in this report (part I-B). In that part, source claimed that the reforming of the government was master-minded by the Soviets who wanted to discipline the rivals, Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu, both of whom were deprived of some of their power. Source points out that the newly formed Albanian Government is the strongest that could be formed in the country and that all government members are old communists who have

earned the confidence of the Communist Party. Although probably known, source repeats the list of Albanian cabinet members:

1. Enver Hodja, President of the Council of Ministers
2. Mehmet Shehu, Minister of the Interior and Assistant President of the Council of Ministers
3. Hysni Kapo, Minister of Agriculture and State Deliveries, as well as Assistant President of the Council of Ministers
4. Behar Shtylla, Minister for Foreign Affairs
5. General Beqir Balluku, Minister of Defense
6. Spiro Koleka, Minister of Industry and Constructions
7. Gogo Nushi, Minister of Trade and Public Works
8. General Bedri Spahja, Minister of Education and Culture
9. Tuk Yakova, Minister of Finance
10. Bilbil Klosi, Minister of Justice
11. Dr. Medar Shtylla, Minister of Health
12. Kocho Theodori, Chairman of the Governmental Planning Commission
13. General Shevqet Pechi, Chairman of the Governmental Control Commission

As most of the newly appointed ministers do not have the slightest idea how to run their departments, they have assistant ministers; some have even two assistants. Aside from the competent assistant ministers, each ministry has a Soviet advisor. Those generals who had been given ministerial posts did not lose their contact with the army and have also retained their various army command ranks. In case of a necessity, they will immediately resume their posts as army commanders. Four ministries, those of Forests, Mines, Military Supply and External Trade have been abolished.

B. Source is unable to give information concerning the personnel and/or working methods of the various state commissions.

C. A newly passed law has reinstated the pre-1939 administrative system in Albania and the country is now once more divided into ten administrative districts. These districts are directly affiliated with the Ministry of Interior and are governed by a triumvirate of three commissions which are, supposedly, elected by the people and approved by the Communist Party and the government. The three commissions are the following:

1. "Komsiyon Ekzekutif" (executive committee) is in charge of all administrative affairs.

2. "Komsiyon i ndermarjeve shtitnare" (commission of state organizations) is in charge of governmental stores, cooperatives, food distribution, fuel distribution, collecting agricultural delivery quotas, etc.

3. "Komisyon i Arsimit, rekrutimit, te artizanatit" (commission for education, sports, military affairs and artisans) takes care of educational matters, controls military draft boards, sports organizations and artisan cooperatives and collectives.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee is the highest authority in the district. No other administrators, such as governors, are appointed. Towns and villages have their own executive committees which are subordinate to the district executive committee. Both the main executive committee and its branch committees are constantly under Party control. The ten administrative centers (district capitals) are as follows: (1) Durres (Durazzo); (2) Tirana; (3) Diber (Debre); (4) Berat; (5) Kukes; (6) Shkoder; (7) Elbasan; (8) Korcha (Goritsa); (9) Gjinokastra; (10) Vlora.

Aside from the above mentioned facts, source has no further information concerning this matter.

III. The Security Organization and Concentration Camps

A. The police force was organized by the late General Kocho Xaxa, first Minister of the Interior of Communist Albania, immediately after the communists seized Tirana in 1944.

A division of police was formed (Divizjon i Mbrojtjes Populit) composed of former communist guerrilla officers and fighters. This division was placed under the command of General Mehmet Shehu. Colonel Kicho NGELA was appointed Shehu's assistant and held the rank of General Director of Police. Units of this division were scattered all over Albania and it was this force which carried out the bloody purges of the first period of the Communist reign in Albania. The division existed until the end of 1949 and then was replaced by the "Sigurimi" (security) organization. Until itsbreaks up this police division was almost exclusively a military setup and it recruited its men from among the most reliable communist elements of the regular army.

In late 1949 (or early 1950) the "Sigurimi" was founded as a civilian security organization. It recruited its men from among the disbanded units of the former police division and trusted civilians. While the men of the police division served as soldiers subject to draft and therefore without pay, members of the "Sigurimi" receive regular salaries from the Ministry of the Interior. The new security organization was composed of five battalions each with a complement of six hundred men and the entire setup was placed under the command of General Mehmet Shehu. Three battalions are constantly stationed at the capital, Tirana. The other two are known as "Batalionet ndjekjes" (pursuit battalions). These pursuit battalions are motorized modern units

16 101

and it is their duty to quell any uprisings against the communist regime. Their headquarters are also at Tirana but they are in constant readiness to move to any parts of the country in case of an emergency. They have proved most efficient, especially in putting down the uprisings in northern Albania.

In early 1953, new commanding officers were put in charge of the two pursuit battalions. Major Ismail MALA, a native of Tirana, was given command of the 1st battalion and Major HAFIZI (fnu), a native of Durres, became commander of the 2nd battalion. Both are known as ruthless, blood-thirsty officers. The two pursuit battalions have forty trucks, twelve 'Fiat' armored cars and close to two hundred motorcycles. Their men are equipped with Russian-made automatic weapons and have modern equipment. Among their most effective weapons figure demolition bombs and grenades.

Aside from these five security battalions, there is also the "Policija Rurale" (rural police) whose duty is to control traffic on highways and check travelling permits and other documents. This unit is also motorized and is also under the command of General Shehu.

The formation of the "Sigurimi" forces was completed in 1951 and at that time, the last remnants of the former police division were dissolved. Those men who were not incorporated into the "Sigurimi" battalions were sent to regular army units. The "Sigurimi" forces and the affiliated rural police have no connection with the Ministry of Defense and are under the command of the Ministry of the Interior. However, "Sigurimi" officers have the right to demand assistance from military commanders if such a measure is found necessary. Soviet Colonel KERESTOFF (fnu) organized the "Sigurimi". The security organization is entirely loyal to the government and the Communist Party.

B. There are three important concentration camps in Albania. From north to south they are:

1. The Burel camp located three kilometers west of Burel, administrative center of the borough of Mat, district of Tirana. The camp, which is the largest in Albania, has about 2,500 inmates, at least 500 of whom are political prisoners, i.e. former ministers, diplomats, police and army officers. A modern prison, built during the Italian occupation, stands near the camp. The prisoners at Burel are employed as laborers on road constructions, workers in stone quarries, miners at the Klos chrome mine near Burel and laborers on the construction sites of the "Enver" and "Lenin" hydro-electric power stations.

2. The Cerrik camp located seven kilometers west of Elbasan. The 1500-2000 inmates of this camp worked on the

83 1017

construction of the Tirana-Durres-Kavaya-Elbasan railroad. For the past two years, the camp inmates worked on the petroleum refinery under construction at Cerrik, on the barrel factory and on the construction of close to three hundred houses, part of a housing project for the refinery personnel.

3. The Tepelen camp located near Tepelen. The camp is actually situated within the "Citta Militare" (military city) constructed by the Italians during their occupation of Albania. There are an estimated 2500-3000 inmates in the camp area surrounded by barbed wire. Tepelen is feared because it is the worst concentration camp in the whole country and is generally known as a "death camp". It is said that those who are sent there do not expect to leave it alive. The inmates, divided into groups of 400-500 men, are employed in road construction, canal digging and drying up swamps. Most public works in southern Albania are carried out with forced labor from the Tepelen camp.

Aside from the above named three concentration camps, the Tirana jail houses some 1000 political prisoners, who are among the most important in the country. The old citadel of Gjinokastro holds another 500 political prisoners. According to the sources' estimate, there are close to 2,000 political prisoners in Albanian prisons, 9,000 persons in concentration camps and about 1,500 persons in jail still awaiting sentence. Living conditions in both prisons and camps are inhuman and the death rate is very high. Prisoners die as a result of the tortures, undernourishment, epidemics, and there are many who commit suicide because they cannot endure the terrible living conditions. In the prisons the inmates are very crowded and only those already sentenced may see their relatives for fifteen minutes once a month. Prisoners still awaiting sentence are not allowed to have any contact with the outside world.

For the Consul General

Donald B. Calder
American Consul

Copy to:
Embassy Anka

SECRET

861017